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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Identical letters dated 25 November 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter addressed to H.E. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, from H.E. Walid Al-Moualem, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, regarding the severe humanitarian situation in Gaza (see annex).

I would highly appreciate it if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 15 and 16, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 25 November 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

Israel is continuing to carry out its policy of aggression, blockade and starvation against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip in grave violation of international law, conventions and principles. In view of the escalating humanitarian tragedy that is taking place in the Gaza Strip as a consequence of the oppressive Israeli blockade, I have been charged by Mr. Bashar Al-Assad, President of the Syrian Arab Republic in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Summit, to write to you concerning the assumption by the Organization of its responsibility to prevail on Israel to desist immediately from its immoral and inhuman practices which are a clear violation of international law and principles.

The blockade imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip and the total closure of all crossing points have led to a grave deterioration of various aspects of life in Gaza, have exacerbated the humanitarian situation and increased the suffering of the Palestinians as a consequence of the policy of collective punishment to which they have been subjected, consisting in cutting off the supply of electricity, fuel and drinking water and spreading poverty, hunger and unemployment.

The life of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip is threatened by this blockade; hospitals use candles for lighting, and flour mills have begun to use birdseed to produce flour for making bread. There is also an acute shortage of food and fuel and as a consequence the lives of hundreds of sick people in the Gaza Strip, particularly children, are in serious jeopardy as a result of the electricity cuts and the lack of basic medicines. To date, 260 people have died as a result of the blockade, including 57 children.

Despite the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and repeated appeals to the Israeli occupying authorities to cease these practices they have not so far heeded them. Consequently, we look to you to take immediate action to address this humanitarian disaster, which is no less serious than other humanitarian disasters on which the United Nations has taken action, and to exert pressure on Israel to open the crossing points immediately and to allow the entry into the Gaza Strip of medical supplies, food and fuel so that more than one and a half million Palestinians can have access to them.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(*Signed*) Walīd **Al-Moualem**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic

Damascus, 25 November 2008